

Against
UNIVERSALL
Libertie of
CONSCIENCE.

BEING
ANIMADVERSIONS
UPON
Two *Letters* written to a *Friend*
Pleading for it.

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An Extract of
A Letter.

Animadversions.

I Every day grow
stronger for an V-
niversall liberty of
Conscience.

AN Univerfall liberty of Con-
science, is an universall liber-
ty to Sin, to maintaine He-
resie, to practise Idolatry,
to vent Blasphemy; in a
word, an universall liberty to dishonour
God, under pretence of Serving him, and
to damme ones own soule irrecoverably,
(unlesse every one may be saved by his
own Religion, though never so false) and
to hazard (as much as men can) the
damnation of multitudes of others, who
may be infected by such poysonfull Do-
ctrines.

*Neer can I altogether agree with
Mr. D. that either in a particu-
lar Con-regation, or Synodicaill
Government of severall Chur-
ches, there neede any, either
bond, as not to part upon occa-
sion; or such carriage of things
by Vote as should become a pres-
sure upon weake Consciences,
with which though weake and
erronious) wee are taught by
Scripture to beare.*

No Conscience deserves to be
called Wake, but that which
holds the foundation truly,
though weakely, and withall
expresses the power of Con-
science in what ever it holds,
walking according to the Rules
of Piety and Honesty acknow-
ledged. How shall I beleve
that man acts or forbears, pro-
fesses, or denies out of Consci-
ence (though weak) who in un-
deniable waters hath put away
Conscience, or feared it?

And

I

And in truth if it be sadly weighed that the Dictates of the Conscience are not (like those of our Reason or Will) submittible at our owne pleasures to an outward power,

being that part of the inward Man which God doth particularly claim to himselfe,

it might invite all Christians to vindicate one anothers Conscience from errors by powerful compulsion of Gods Word, but not by outward punishments to compell them to that which is

not

I doe not understand how it is said a *man* can submit his Reason (any more then his Conscience) to an outward power; I may be silent, but my Reason is not submitted, when I feare an outward power: Also, is not a mans Reason applyed to matters of Conscience, the Eye of it, whereby a man judges this or that Doctrine to be truth, whether he be mistaken in it, or no? If then I can submit my Reason can I not, (doe I not) also submit my Conscience;

Not know I how properly it is said, that the Conscience cannot be separated from the Reason and Will: *is that part of the inward man which God doth peculiarly claime to himselfe* claimes not the whole man (inward (as well as outward) the Reason, Memory, Will, Affections) as well as the Conscience? if the Conscience be not rather all these, as relating to Religion; Also, if a mans conscience must be wholly left to the powerfull compulsion of Gods Word, why not a mans Reason or Will also, without offering to either the violence of outward power?

Hence it is Obiected *That it is not to be compell'd to that which is not in its owne power.*

Ans. The word, *compelling*, being mistaken in regard of the end of it, deceives. Or else this Assertion is very dangerous. For, 1. The punishment is not to compell to put away or deny Conscience, but either to study, or receive meanes of Instruction to *satisfie Conscience*; Or to forbear spreading an Error, which would pervert Scales, or breede publike disturbance. And this Compulsion may (if you list so to distinguish) be sayd to be applicable rather to the Reason or Will, then to the Conscience, unlesse you will suppose the Conscience to be so *peremptory*, as to conclude, that all is but delusion that can be said against it, and so violent, as none upon earth

not in their
own power,

may command them silence. Which kinde of Conscience I dare be bold to say, the Apostle had not in his minde, when he gave Rules about *weake* Consciences. Nor can you describe mee a *perverse* or willfull Conscience if this be to be counted *weake*. 2. If no man may be punished, for that which is not in his owne power, 1: How then, is an habitudinated Theife, Drunkard, Swearer, &c. punished, of whom we confesse, that he cannot leave it? 2: How doth God justly punish the Reprobate, in whose power surely (God not giving him grace) even *Pelagius* himselfe durst not say, it was to convert himselfe.

but it must
be (by our
owne confession)
though a
truth in it
selfe, yet it
is a sinne in
them.

It is againe objected, *Wee confesse, though the thing be truth in it selfe, yet it is a Sinne in them.*

But is it not a Sinne also to deny Truth, to forbear duty, to speake and act against both? The way then to free the man from Sinne, is to instruct him; and if he be froward and will not receive Instruction, then to perswade him by some punishment, to be so humble and wise, as to hearken; yet not force him to act, or professe, till he be instructed, Only if his opinion or practise, fret like a Gangrene (as the Apostles phrase is) a Restraint may be, and should be put upon that man, even the while Instruction is offering.

And though e-
very mans par-
ticular Zeale to
his owne fan-
cies, hath al-
most swallowed
those two best of
Christian ver-
tues, and true
badges of Chri-
stianity,

I acknowledge *Charity* and *Humility* to be great vertues; But *Faith* must not be forgotten among Christians, without which a man cannot be a Christian at all; nor *Zeale*, without which a man shall be spewed out of Christs mouth. I would be charitable to a Jew, or Turke, or Arrivan; But if my *Faith* condemne not their opinions as damnable, I have no true *Faith* in Christ; And if my *Zeale* can endure their blasphemy against Christ, I am not so respective to him as I would be to the honour of my Prince, or even of my selfe: Nor yet doe I love their Soules (or others

stianity, Charity and Humility.

others whom they will endanger if let alone) so much as I doe a mans Horses or Oxen, which I will neither suffer infectious Cattle to come amongst, nor yet to be stolne without punishment. In matters of doubtfull disputations, *Humility* doth well not to obtrude any opinion too pre-emptorily. But Religion allowes no *Scepticisme* under pretence of *Humility*, in matters of moment. And the best *Charity*, is to secure others *Soules*, and labour to regaine the Erring, by instruction, seconded with all other motives.

Yet Naturall Reason, the Rules of common civility, and *Lex Talionis*, might fully teach us to be that to others, which wee could wish others towards us, the Tables being turned; and I dare boldly say, that there is not a Sect now amongst us, that if they may not tyrannize over all the other nine, would not thinke their truth (whatsoever in it self) fit to be tollerated, and how, (but from an insolent over-valuing our owne thoughts) can any of us deny, that priviledge to others, which wee claime from others as just:

As for naturall Reason, common Civility, and *Lex talionis*, the Tables being turned; I say in a word, As it is my duty to suffer for truth, if God call me to it; and my duty to fight for the truth, if God call me to that. So is it no lesse my duty to use the Sword of Justice to vindicate the truth, and Gods honour, and Soules Safety (according to the method afore exprest) if God have intrusted me with that Sword also. And in conclusion, he spake like a wise man, that said, It is better to live in that Common Wealth, where nothing is lawfull, then where every thing. Apply this to Religion, and you have my heart fully subscribing it thus. I had rather live among Barbarians, amongst whom nothing of the true Religion is suffered, then any where in the world among all Religions suffered.

An Extract of another Letter before the sending
of the former *Animadversions*.

The Letter.

Animadversions,

I Am sorry to see that in mat-
ter of Conscience you send me
to Authority: my Reason and
Will are my owne, though not
to consent, yet to be submitted by
me to Authority, but the Con-
science is Gods peculiar?
which to offend though
erroneous is a Sinne;
and if a sinne in me to
doe it, I cannot conceive
at lesse in them, that by
any kinde or degree of
persecution, tempt or
force me.

The Bishops, upon a
conscientious sight of
errors forlooke
Romes authority,
wee upon the like
groundes have outed
the Bishops, against
whom the greatest ob-
jection was that which
we now allow not o-
thers to make; And

A Game, I would faine be
informed how I can sub-
mit my Reason, more than my
Conscience to Authority. And
also how I may submit my
will, unlesse in things indiffe-
rent, or in Sufferings?

It is indeed a Sin to offend conscience,
though erroneous, but it is also a sinne to
act according to that erroneous con-
science: So that he who suffers sinne up-
on his brother, is guilty, as well as he
that tempts or forces him to sinne; but he
that offers to teach him, and forces him
to no more, but to hearken, and consider,
or to forbear infecting others, is so
farre from tempting him to sinne, that he
betrayses his and others soules, together
with Gods truth, if he doe it not.

Wee (and not the Bishops onely) for-
sooke Romes authority, not simply because
Rome taught other errors, but even be-
cause its Authority was an Error; and so
was the Bishops Authority too, though
some of the men were, and are yet very
Orthodoxe in other points: but now
no such Authority is assumed by any as
they usurped.

and that unpartially, free, unmuzzled triall of truth, which we thought unjustly denied to us from the Bishops, wee now as unjustly and Bishop like deny to others.

Truth among those that can understand and apprehend it, hath a subduing power beyond the whip, and in those that understand not, the whip may perhaps breede a submission, but not possibly, that consent, knowledge, and faith, without which actions most conformable to truth, are yet in us but sine.

I read in the Scriptures many excellent Rules of bearing, not offending, not judging, not putting a stumbling block in the way of those for whom (though perhaps weak and erroneous) Christ dyed, &c. I read 2 Tim. 2. 24, 25. That we should be gentle, apt to teach, patient, in meeknesse instructing even them that oppose themselves.

It was not the Authority of the Bishops (as Bishops) but the tyranny of some (of most) of them, that denyed us an unpartially, free, unmuzzled tryall of truth (as your phrase is) but this, *quatenus* Tyrann call, must only referre to those truthe which Protestants differ in, not to those which are vitalls of Christianity. For if by an unpartially free, unmuzzled tryall of truth, we mean a liberty publicke to dispute whether Christ be God? or the Soule immortall? we never complained that this liberty was denied, which cannot be granted, without enduring blasphemy, and hazzarding many fouler.

It is certaine that truth apprehended subdues most strongly, but it is also certaine, that, *vexatio dat intellectum*. The rodde and reproofe give wisdom, Prov. 29. 15. And it is undeniable to me in reason and experience, that by forcing a man to study, he may be subdued to and by truth, that would have scorned it eternally, if your whippe had not taught him better manners.

Yet I say still. No man should be forced to act without faith, but onely to give just proofe, that he is willing to receive truth, and to labour for it, and withall to forbear mischeiving others.

The Rules towards a weak Conscience are delivered in meeres of indifferency, and Christian Liberty by them not seene, not in matters of greatest moment in Religion, yet meeknesse is to be bated (by Teachers) even to such as oppose themselves, but by Governours, so much severity withall, as their frowardnesse, and others danger call for. God

Nay further, I find generalls in the word of God, that the followers of truth must suffer persecution;

but for their persecuti-
on of o-
thers, or
whipping
men into
the truth,
I finde net-
her pre-
cept in
Scripture,
nor exam-
ple any
where else
but at Rome

I pray pardon this digressi-
on, in which I am if erro-
neous) yet impartiall in
what concernes me, not be-
ing neither Brownist nor
Anabaptist, but wishing
those a being among us, who
doyn with us in one Christi-
an and one Common liberty.

God indeed saith *All that will live godly in Christ Iesus shall suffer persecution.* But men that call for liberty of conscience, doe in effect say that neither godly nor ungodly may be made to suffer any thing, if they doe but pretend conscience.

As for persecuting (or whipping) men into the truth, There be examples and precepts too, more then one in the old Testament. (and it were injustice to looke for them in the New Testament, which mentions no godly or christian Magistrates acts: nor any one name but the converted *Sergius Paulus*, *Act. 13.* nor any duty of Majestrates, but that, *Rom. 13.* of not bearing the Sword in vaine &c :) The precept against the false Prophet, *Deut. 13.* And the whole City seduced to Idolatry; and against Blasphemy, *Lev. 24.* and giving their Seed to *Moloch*, *Lev. 20. 2.* And the example of *Elijah* slaying the Prophets of *Baall*. *1 Kings 18.* who yet acted according to their consciences apparently: and *Asa's* covenant that whoever would not seeke God should be put to death; and *Iosiahs* compelling them to serve God: and yet no doubt many consciences still cleaved to their Idolls, and so the story and the Prophets assure us. *Rome* then did not introduce this; but abuses it against the truth which was ordayned for it.

As you are impartiall, so am I so moderate, as to wish an Anabaptist or Brownist lesse punishment then they wish mee, and doe sincerely wish them, so long a being among us (I means their persons) as is necessary to convince them of their errors, provided that they will shew they sincerely seeke truth, and forbear seducing others, but not otherwise.

FINIS.

